THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir. Information has since been collected and is given below.

(b) (i) Bank of India has informed that at their Opera House Branch 22 accounts reportedly of benami type were alleged to have been opened.

(ii) State Bank of Saurashtra has informed that 4 (four) accounts of Fort Branch, 2 (two) accounts of Darbargadh (Bhavanagar) branch and 1(one) account of Nilambaug Chowk branch reported of benami type were alleged to have been opened. Department of Enforcement is investigating the details regarding four accounts of their Fort Branch.

(iii) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has informed that according to Standard Chartered Bank, 14 (Fourteen) accounts of their Dr. D.N. Road Branch, M.G. Road Branch and Chowpatty Branch came to adverse notice for heavy cash deposits and/or remittances against suspected fraudulent documents.

(iv) RBI has reported that according to Sangli Bank they do not have benami accounts at its Fort Mumbai Branch.

(c) Bank of India and State Bank of Saurashtra have informed that branches had opened these accounts only upon fulfilling the laid down guidelines such as obtaining proper introduction and following norms for depositing cheques and permitting withdrawals. Hence, no action is deemed necessary against officials concerned for opening those accounts, RBI has informed that according to Standard Chartered Bank all the fourteen accounts were duly introduced by other banks or by existing account holders. However, subsequent verification of some of the addresses given in the account opening forms revealed that these were addresses of business centres where there had been arrangements by the account holder to get the mail. In some cases the account opening procedures had not been strictly completed with and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken by the bank. However, there was no evidence of collusion of staff with account holders.

RBI has informed that to check the incidence of benami accounts the banks have been instructed to introduce a system of obtaining photographs of persons authorised to operate the new deposit-accounts with effect from 1st January, 1994. Further in terms of letter dated 17.10.94 all the public sector banks have ben advised by RBI to get independent confirmation of addresses of account holders in all cases.

Bank of India, State Bank of Saurashtra and Standard Chartered Bank have reported that instructions are issued to all the branches from time to time to strictly follow the laid down guidelines for opening new accounts and also monitor all the newly opened accounts closely for any suspicious transaction.

Oil Exploration

5088. SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to allow participation of Indian Public Sector Petroleum Companies in the Equity participation programme in abroad to float the companies business with overseas arrangements;

(b) the special measures taken in this regard;

(c) whether the total approach as envisaged by the Government in the Seventh and Eighth Five Year Plans for ultimate self-sufficiency in the oil exploration programme step by step had not taken off; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and the remedies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) and (b) ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) is engaged in pursuing opportunities for acquiring equity oil abroad. It had entered into Production Sharing Agreements for exploration in Vietnam, Yemen, Egypt and Tunisia. It is also exploring for contracts in Kazakhstan, Iraq etc.

(c) and (d) In the VII Plan the exploratory drilling targets in terms of wells were achieved by ONGC, though there was shortfall in meterage. In the VIII Plan the targets in exploratory drilling could not be achieved. Govt. has announced various rounds for participation by private companies in oil exploration. Recently the New Exploration Licensing Policy has also been announced to significantly boost exploration efforts in the country. The endeavour for going into deep water exploration and continuing exploration in frontier basins, in addition to undertaking new technology areas like Coal Bed Methane, are some of the initiatives to augment exploratory efforts in domestic acreages in the IX Plan.

[Translation]

Beedi Workers

5089. SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether thousands of beedi workers from almost every part of the country had organised a rally in Delhi during March on call from Akhil Bhartiya Beedi Workers Federation;

(b) if so, the details of their demands; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Eastern Gandak Hydro Power Project

5090. DR M.P JAISWAL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether all units of Eastern Gandak Hydro Power Project at Balmiki Nagar in Bihar set-up with the loan of Japan Government have started functioning;

(b) if so, the quantum of power in MW being generated in these units;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government of Japan have made available full amount for the purpose ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI) : (a) Two Units out of three units of Eastern Gandak Hydro Power Project are commissioned at present. The third Unit has not been commissioned so far for want of replacement of field circuit breaker. Automatic Voltage Regulator (AVR) and electric governor which were damaged during transit. Unti 1 and 2 has been commissioned on 13.9.1995 and 28.6.1996 respectively.

(b) and (c) The total power generated upto April 15, 1997 from these units has been 28.7 MU. Both the units are operating at their rated capacity of 5 MW each.

(d) The project has been funded through OECF loan. The contracted amount of loan was 1628 Million Yen and the full amount of loan has been disbursed by OECF.

OECF have been requested by Bihar Hydro Power Corporation Limited to provide an additional loan of 56.45 Million Yen in terms of grant to enable to meet the expenditure required for replacement of field circuit breaker. AVR and electric governer and supervision changes during the commissioning of third Units.

[English]

Public Administration

5091. SHRI JAGMOHAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated any scheme to ensure smooth and effective functioning of the Public Administration during the period of political instability or uncertainty; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) The question does not arise.

Setting up of Hydro Power Project at Purnia

5092. SHRI RAJESH RANJAN *alias* PAPPU YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a hydro power plant at Purnia district in Bihar;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the time by which the plant is likely to be set up; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI) : (a) to (c) There is no Project report for Hydroelectric Project in Purnia District pending for techno-economic clearance in Central Electricity Authority. There is no hydroelectric project under construction in Purnia District.

[Translation]

Employment Opportunities under New Economic Policy

5093. DR. RAMVILAS VEDANTI : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have prepared any programme to create employment opportunities under the new economic policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the number of unemployed youths likely to be benefited under this scheme during 1997-98 ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (c) The Eighth Five Year Plan has formulated a medium term strategy to create additional employment opportunities of the order of 8.5 million per annum on an average. The strategy of employment growth is likely to be continued during the Ninth Plan period and 9.5 million additional employment opportunities per annum on an average is expected to be generated which could benefit unemployed youths during the period 1997-2002. To achieve this rate of growth of employment the Plan envisaged an employment strategy which lays emphasis on the growth of sectors and sub-sectors with high employment intensity such as agriculture, agro and rural industries, rural infrastructure, small and decentralised manufacturing sector, urban informal sector and the services sector. New employment schemes such as Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), and the two-million Job Scheme of the KVIC have been introduced in the Eighth Plan period besides continuing the ongoing schemes like IRDP, JRY and NRY. The Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Alleviation Programme has also an element of employment generation with the provision of basic services to the poorer segments of the population.

[English]

Gas Agencies

5094. SHRI PAWAN DIWAN :
DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIA :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the names of places in Chhattisgarh and Ujjain districts of Madhya Pradesh where Liquified Petroleum Gas agencies have been established and since when;

(b) the number of additional connections of liquified petroleum gas provided to these agencies during each of the last three years;

(c) the number of persons registered with these